

The Hill: Governing is responsibility of both parties

February 2, 2009

Governing is responsibility of both parties

By Rep. Joe Wilson (R-S.C.) - 02/02/10 07:39 PM ET

On the heels of Republican victories in Virginia, New Jersey and most recently Massachusetts, the president sent a straightforward message to Republicans in his State of the Union address that "the responsibility to govern is now yours, as well." Accepting the responsibility to govern is something we have been doing for quite some time now. Informing hardworking Americans about the realities behind the Washington liberal agenda is governing; fighting proposals like a cap-and-tax bill and government healthcare takeover that our constituents oppose is governing; and introducing more affordable and measureable policy alternatives is not only governing, it is governing responsibly.

document.context='YjozNDAwfA==';

In trying times like these, I am reminded of the old Japanese proverb: "Vision without action is a daydream. Action without vision is a nightmare."

Knee-jerk reactions to crises are particularly counterproductive, especially if they are coming from Congress. The American people have stood up to the government takeover of healthcare and a national energy tax in part because they have not been sold on the benefits of this big-government vision.

Republicans, on the other hand, have a vision that we have successfully articulated to the American people for the first time in several years. Given the right ingredients, we believe that people, not the government, can correct this financial mess. The combination of low taxes, worker training, right-to-work protections, and less regulatory red tape is a sound recipe to attract business.

In the president's State of the Union address, there were certainly some policy items that fit into this sound job-creation recipe. President Barack Obama's call to "eliminate all capital gains taxes on small-business investment, and provide a tax incentive for all large businesses and all small businesses to invest in new plants and equipment," is something we should all applaud. Between this new support for small business, and also his assistance for first-time homebuyers and a child care tax credit, Republicans have more than enough to get the conversation rolling.

During this conversation, congressional Democrats and the White House should also look at other proposals that we have presented to Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.):

- Providing a 5 percent across-the-board income tax cut;
- Allowing small businesses to take a tax deduction equal to 20 percent of their income;
- Making the lower 15 percent rate on capital gains and dividends permanent;
- Making all withdrawals from IRAs tax- and penalty-free;
- Permanently repealing required distributions on retirement accounts; and
- Increasing the child tax credit from \$1,000 to \$5,000.

In these tough economic times, it is incumbent on all of us to come across the aisle and put a bill together with the job-creation items that we all agree on.

The same can be said for healthcare financing reform. There are plenty of items we can coordinate on to develop a plan to make healthcare more affordable and accessible. Enacting medical liability reform, expanding Health Savings Accounts, offering individuals more pooling options, and offering the option to shop across state lines are not hyper-partisan policies. If any Democrat introduces a bill with these elements, I'm confident that Republican cosponsors will line up to support it.

However, these bipartisan negotiations must be done in the light of day. If the elections in Virginia, New Jersey and Massachusetts have taught us anything, it is that people are tired of politics-as-usual in Washington. If a promise is made on the campaign trail to give the American people a seat at the negotiation table, then it should be kept. That is part of governing responsibly and honestly.

The president's "responsibility to govern" message that was targeted at Republicans should have echoed over to the other side of the aisle and down Pennsylvania Avenue. On matters of national security, President

Obama is going to need his political capital to get congressional liberals behind his decision to listen to the commanders on the ground and send 30,000 reinforcements to Afghanistan.

Hours before the State of the Union, Speaker Pelosi called for any spending freeze to also apply to defense spending — highlighting the crack that the president will have to mend within his own party as he explains to congressional liberals that cutting defense spending while we are involved in two wars overseas and the Global War on Terror is reckless.

The conditions across America leading up to the State of the Union address were, and still are, quite serious. Unemployment is at double digits and in South Carolina, it is at an all-time high at 12.6 percent. We have troops in Afghanistan and Iraq. The nuclear threat from countries like Iran and North Korea is disquieting. And even on Christmas Day, Americans were reminded that terrorists continue to wage a deadly war against us.

This environment requires not finger-pointing about whose responsibility it is to govern, but rather for us all to come together to govern responsibly by focusing on national security and job creation to promote opportunity for American families.

Wilson is a member of the House committees on Armed Services; Education and Labor; and Foreign Affairs.

Source:

<http://thehill.com/special-reports/state-of-the-union-wrap-up-february-2010/79397-governing-is-responsibility-of-both-parties>